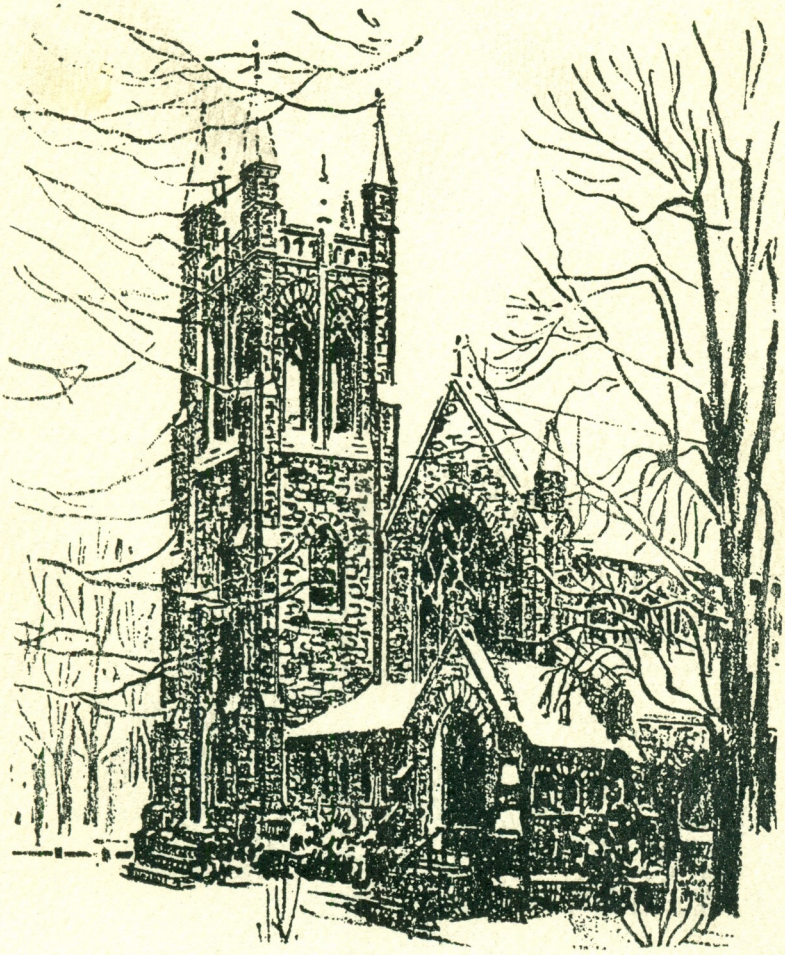
Calvary Church

IN GERMANTOWN



100th Anniversary

1859 ~ 1959

Calvary Church in Germantown

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1859 – 1959

Manheim Street and Pulaski Avenue

Germantown

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The Rev. William J. Dietrich, Jr., D.D.
Rector 1939 —

Preface

In order to write a complete history of Calvary Church, there should be included, in addition to the clergymen who served during the past one hundred years, the names of the many devoted laymen and laywomen who were in a large measure responsible for the founding, growth and achievements of Calvary Parish. However, it is not intended to make this a complete history, but rather a sketch reciting the main events and accomplishments in the life of the Parish during a century of existence.

The story of the first fifty years was easily obtainable. The events of those years were chronicled by the Reverend J. DeWolf Perry, D.D., and published in a booklet in 1910. More effort was required in obtaining the information for the second fifty years. However, a history of the Parish was published, in serial form, in the issues of *The Key* and covered the years up to and including the year 1948. This history was compiled by Miss Frances L. Bowers, to whom I am deeply indebted. My thanks and appreciation also go to Mr. Albert Bishop, who garnered the information of the subsequent years from the minutes of the meetings of the Vestry.

Perhaps there are errors and omissions, and for these I ask your indulgence.

G. F. Ilsemann, Jr.

Calvary Church in Germantown

A Sketch: 1859 to 1959

Although, in 1858, three Episcopal Churches existed in Germantown, Episcopalians and others living in the neighborhood, in which the Church now stands, and which at that time consisted of country seats and farms, desired a Church which would be more accessible for themselves and their families than any one of the then existing parishes.

To encourage those who were desirous of establishing a new church, Mr. James Huber, who attended the German Reformed Church, offered a building lot, which at the time was a pasture for cows, and situate at Plank Road and Betton's Lane, now Pulaski Avenue and Manheim Street. Later Mr. Huber, his wife and children were confirmed in the Church and were numbered among its earnest and active supporters. The only condition attached to his gift was that no burials should be made in the Church grounds.

Persons interested in the project met in November 1858. Funds having already been subscribed for a building, it was resolved by the meeting to organize a Parish and begin at once to build. The form of Charter recommended by the Diocesan Convention of 1858 was adopted and twelve vestrymen were elected. The name Calvary Church, Germantown, was adopted.

At a later meeting of the building committee and others, plans for the building were submitted and approved. A contract was made with a builder to construct a Gothic Stone Church to cost $6,370, to be finished, if possible, May 1, 1859. Ground had already been broken and excavation of the cellar begun. Haste to complete the building resulted in poor workmanship. The walls, erected in freezing weather, and not too solidly built, were found too weak to support the roof. While the slaters were at work, the walls bulged and threatened to fall. However, the walls were braced and buttressed by timbers until the cement hardened and cross beams were added to

strengthen the walls and support the roof. These beams broke the arch of the timber ceiling—a disfigurement, architecturally, but essential to the safety of the building. A plain stone cross surmounted the little belfry over the front door. This was condemned by one of the Vestrymen as not consistent with the Protestant Church. It was quietly removed and buried at night in the Church lot. In its place was set up an encircled cross which also did not meet with unanimous approval.

The building was completed within the time specified in the contract and was consecrated Saturday, April 30, 1859. On the day following, the first service was held at which the Bishop of Vermont officiated and preached.

THE REVEREND THOMAS K. CONRAD was called to be the first Rector at a salary of $1,000. He accepted the call January 13, 1859, and took charge the middle of the following month. On the Sunday following that of the consecration, a number of children came to the Church asking for the Sunday School. It so happened that the Rector and a Warden were in the Church and they immediately received and taught the children. Thus began Calvary Sunday School. In order to accommodate the Sunday School, additional land was acquired and a stone building of two stories was erected. At this time, "Calvary Church Academy" was established and became a successful and useful school for the neighborhood. In order to accommodate the increased attendance, the building was added to and enlarged. Finally, in 1894, the building was removed and replaced by the present Parish House.

The income of the Church, for the first year, from pew rents and offerings was $1,436.25, not including the funds received for the school building. Owing to the cost of erecting the school building and other expenses, the year closed with a debt of $1,901.78, which was allowed to accumulate and embarrass the Parish for fifteen years.

After a rectorship of four years, the Reverend Mr. Conrad resigned, and on March 23, 1863, the Vestry elected the Reverend George A. Strong. In 1864, additional ground on Manheim Street was purchased, on which it was planned to build a Rectory.

At this time the Civil War was raging, making it unfavorable for Church interest and tending to divide sentiments and sympathies. The expressions of Mr. Strong, a Northern man, and intensely loyal, from the pulpit, were not approved and liked by his parishioners. Frequently, the ringing of the Church bell was the first public announcement of a Union victory. Many amusing incidents occurred in the effort on one hand, to open the Church and be the first to ring the bell, and on the other hand, to oppose and prevent such use of the bell which was primarily intended to call the people to worship.

In November 1865, Mr. Strong tendered his resignation. The Vestry, finding that he could not be persuaded to withdraw his resignation, finally accepted it, to take effect November 1, 1865, as he requested.

THE PARISH remained without a Rector for ten months, during which interval the Vestry made an unsuccessful effort to induce the congregation to remove the indebtedness of the Parish which had grown to $5,500. The failure was more discouraging, because, at this time disagreements and dissension appeared in the Parish, which disturbed and impeded its growth.

The Reverend James DeWolf Perry was called from the Diocese of Rhode Island and took charge of the Parish on May 13, 1866. At once and under the leadership of the new Rector, efforts were made to reduce expenses and increase income. The parishioners were urged and trained to make systematic offerings for the maintenance and work in the Parish. Before the end of the year, a committee of the Vestry was appointed to formulate plans for payment of the debt, enlargement of the Church and building a Rectory. The Church was enlarged first at a cost of $6,161. This was paid before the end of the fiscal year, Easter Day 1868.

From 1866 to 1870, the Vestry had rented a house on Abbottsford Avenue for the residence of the Rector and his family. On August 2, 1870, ground was broken for the new Rectory, and in the following May, it was occupied by the Rector and his family.

In 1872, the young people of the Parish became interested in providing a new organ which was built at a cost of $2,400. The original small pipe organ which had been purchased second hand and used until this time, was sold to a newly formed Parish in Philadelphia.

At the beginning of Lent in the year 1881, the Rector appealed to the congregation for a special effort to cancel the Church debt of $5,000. There was a special and united effort on the part of the congregation and on Easter Day, the Parish was declared free from debt the first time in its history.

As the congregation had again outgrown the capacity of the Church building, the Rector asked that an offering be made on Easter Day, for either the construction of a new Church or the enlargement of the then present building. The offering amounted to only $294.32. In the spring of 1891, an appeal was made to the congregation to raise $14,000 to remodel and enlarge the Church. Through special offerings of the congregation and the Easter Day offering, the requested amount was obtained. The original plan was to leave a portion of the old building, but following a visit by one of the city building inspectors who declared the building unsafe, the entire structure was condemned and ordered taken down to the foundations. It is interesting to note that this particular building inspector was the mason who built the original walls in 1857. Although the disappointment was great at the time, the result was fortunate. The congregation rose to the emergency and resolved to erect a new and better building. Plans were adopted and a contract for $27,000 was let. The plans did not include the south transept and tower which were to be built when funds were available.

During construction, the congregation met for worship in the school building which was found to be too small and uncomfortable. At this time the Manheim Club was erecting its new building and offered the large hall for use of the congregation. This offer was accepted and the congregation used the hall for services until the Church was ready for occupancy. On December 2nd, the cornerstone of the new Church was laid by Bishop Whitaker. As the new building grew, interest of the people also grew. The women of the parish undertook to raise funds sufficient to build the south transept. The tower was given by Mr. Thomas McKean as a memorial to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. H. Pratt McKean. Memorial windows with stone tracery were given. The pulpit, lectern, communion table and other necessary furnishings were also given as memorials.

The pews in the first Church building had been sold to raise money for the construction. These had been sold or resold as personal property and were the ground for claims in the new building. The Rector did not approve of so disposing of the seats in the Lord's house, and proposed to make all seats free, but his proposal was not approved by the Vestry. However, all owners of pews surrendered their claims enabling the Corporation to own and rent all the pews in the new Church, but setting apart, as forever free, the seats in the north transept. The first service was held in the new building on Sunday morning, November 13, 1892.

On Easter Day, April 2, 1893, the balance due for the new building was received in offerings, and the building was consecrated by Bishop Whitaker on May 30, 1893. The framed certificate of consecration may be seen on the wall just inside the center doors leading into the Church from the vestibule.

FOLLOWING the consecration of the Church building, consideration was given to the erection of a new Parish House, which was needed because of the enlarged congregation and increased work of the parish. Offerings were asked for and appropriated for erecting a new Parish House. The building was completed and opened by a service of dedication conducted by the Rector, February 1895.

On Trinity Sunday, June 9, 1895, Bishop Whitaker ordained eleven candidates for the ministry, one of whom was the Rector's son, the Rev. J. DeWolf Perry, Jr., who was presented by his father.

In the autumn of 1897, a mission was opened to minister to Italians, who were largely employed in the quarry on Wayne Avenue. After two years, on the temporary closing of the quarry, many of the Italians removed from the neighborhood, and the mission discontinued.

In 1898, the final payment was made on the mortgage on the Parish House, thus freeing the Parish from all indebtedness.

The organ used at this time, built in 1872 and rebuilt in 1892, was now thought to be inadequate and was sold to a Roman Catholic Church in a rural section of Pennsylvania. A larger and finer organ was purchased at a cost of $8,050, raised by subscriptions, pledges and offerings made in the Church. It was first used on Palm Sunday, April 8, 1900.

On Friday evening, May 11, 1906, a reception was given by the Wardens and Vestry to mark the fortieth anniversary of the coming to the Parish of Dr. and Mrs. Perry. A resolution recognizing his work in the Diocese was passed at the Diocesan Convention.

In January, 1907, Dr. Perry submitted his resignation, which the Vestry accepted with great regret and unanimously elected him Rector Emeritus. In the following December, the Vestry called the Rev. James Clayton Mitchell, who accepted and began his rectorship February 1, 1908.

AS THE FIFTIETH YEAR of the life of the Parish approached, it was decided to observe the semi-centennial on October 31, 1909. Bishop Whitaker was invited but was unable to attend. He wrote a letter to Mr. Mitchell congratulating and commending the people on the growth of the

Parish. At the service of observation Dr. Perry preached the anniversary sermon.

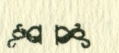
In his sermon he mentioned the missionary work in the immediate neighborhood, particularly among the Italians near the quarry on Wayne Avenue, but the Parish, finding that planting missions in the outlying portions of its own neighborhood was not needed or permitted, directed its efforts elsewhere and was drawn into the general work of the Diocese. The missionary work, which hitherto, had been conducted by a Central Board, was, at that time, reorganized and entrusted to Convocations. Dr. Perry also mentioned in his sermon that the Parish was represented and helpful in erecting the Church House at Walnut and Twelfth Streets; it also took part in forming the Church Club, which has been very useful and successful in interesting laymen in aggressive Christian work; and had no small share in the City Mission, the Divinity School, and in general missions, both domestic and foreign.

It is interesting to note that Dr. Perry was chosen to be the first Dean of the Convocation of Germantown, and that the present Dean is our own Rector, the Rev. William J. Dietrich, Jr., D.D. Calvary Parish continues to be an important segment of the Diocese.

On the Sunday after All Saints' Day, which was the concluding day of the fiftieth anniversary week, the beautiful baptistry, with which we are all familiar, was dedicated. It was the gift of William B. Kurtz, in loving gratitude for the recovery of Mrs. Kurtz from a serious illness.

The Indiana limestone altar, reredos, credence table, Bishop's chair, sedilia and other fittings of the Chancel were given to the Church by Elizabeth Wharton McKean, the mother of Mrs. Norton Downs. The gift was announced by the Rector on June 14, 1911.

In 1913, the gift of Calvary Seaside Cottage at Stone Harbor, New Jersey, to be used as a vacation spot for children, was made.



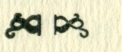
AFTER having served as Rector since 1908, Mr. Mitchell, because of ill health, was granted a leave of absence on October 1, 1914. In the following May he resigned and on June 1, 1915, the Rev. Franklin S. Moore, who had been serving as Priest in Charge, became Rector. In April 1917, the Rev. Charles C. Waugh was named assistant, but in the following year, finances made it necessary to dispense with his services.

In June 1918, all pewholders were notified that after 11.10 Sunday mornings, all seats would be made available for visitors unless the pewholders objected in writing. The same year, the Processional Cross was given by Mr. C. Stevenson Newhall in memory of his Mother. On March 26, 1918, the Rev. Mr. Mitchell died; three years after his resignation.

The year 1920 was a year of growth in Church organizations—the Mother's Meeting was revived; the Daughters of the King and Sigma Mu Lambda were organized. In 1921, the Rev. Allen R. VanMeter became Rector and served the Parish until June 1928 when he resigned.

During the years 1924 and 1925, electric lighting was installed in the Church and Parish House and in 1929 extensive alterations and repairs were made to the Church, Parish House and Rectory at a cost of $7,671.10.

Following the resignation of Mr. VanMeter, the Rev. Lewis G. Morris became Rector on October 10, 1928.



IN 1929, a new charter was adopted, changing the name to Calvary Church, Germantown, increasing the number of Vestrymen from twelve to fifteen, and abolishing the rental of pews effective January 1, 1930. In September, the Rev. Elliott C. B. Darlington became Curate.

Upon the resignation of Mr. Darlington in June 1931, the Rev. Frank Cox became Curate. In November a pair of Eucharistic candlesticks were given by Herman Coxe in memory of Annie and Margaret Coxe.

The depression years were reflected in the notices in the leaflets by requests for food, clothing and employment, and an urgent letter from the Rector begging members not to stay away from Church because they were unable to contribute to the financial support of the Parish.

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of Calvary Church was observed on October 29, 1933, by a special service at which the Rt. Rev. James DeWolf Perry, Presiding Bishop of the Church, was the preacher. There was a congregation of about six hundred fifty persons.

In January 1935, Mr. Cox resigned as assistant and was succeeded by the Rev. Alfred Palmore Harrison, who was ordained as Priest on December 15, the same year. A new Lectern Bible, given by Mrs. Edward N. Moore in memory of her sister, Sally J. Jungkurth, was first used on November 10, 1935. Finances again troubled the Church and at the end of the year a generous member gave $1,500 to reduce the deficit accumulated during the depression years. On New Year's Day 1938, a further gift of $5,000 was

received, leaving an unpaid balance of $1,650, which was paid on October 16, 1938.

The literature rack, in the vestibule of the Church, was given on February 7, 1937, by Mr. and Mrs. Abend in memory of Marion Abend Wildemore.

In September 1938, Mr. James H. Lord, organist for many years, resigned and Mr. Uselma Clarke Smith was appointed as his successor. However, because of illness, it was necessary to ask Mr. Arthur G. Bryan to substitute for him. Mr. Bryan became permanent organist April 20, 1929.

ON MAY 24, 1939, Dr. Morris tendered his resignation to become effective December 3, 1939. The Vestry accepted his resignation and invited him to become Rector Emeritus. The Rev. William J. Dietrich, Jr., was appointed to succeed Dr. Morris and assumed his duties as Rector on December 10, 1939. The Rev. Mr. Harrison left the Parish on October 15, 1939, to become Rector of a church in West Virginia. Because of inadequate church income, the services of Deaconess Newbold were dispensed with on November 15, 1939.

In 1940, announcement was made of the bequest under the will of Thomas E. Baxter. Under the provision of the will, the Church would receive the income from the legacy for a period of five years, at the end of which time, the Church would receive its share of the principal.

Two handsome altar vases, the gifts of Mr. John F. Kolb, were dedicated to the memory of his parents, Jacob and Anna E. Kolb, on February 9, 1941.

During the war years of 1940, 1941 and 1942, special services were held for the families whose members were in the Armed Forces, and boxes were packed and sent to the boys of the Church who were in the military and naval services. A service flag was installed in the Chancel. In order to keep those in the Armed Forces abreast of the activities in the Parish and also as to the whereabouts and doings of each other, the publication of a "newspaper" was conceived by Mr. Russell P. VanCamp. Through his efforts and those of his daughter Jane, "The Grapevine" was published and sent to all Calvary men and women in the Armed Forces. Many comments of appreciation were received from those to whom "The Grapevine" was sent.

On September 20, 1942, Mr. Howard E. Davis, a senior at the Philadelphia Divinity School, joined the Parish staff. Mr. Davis was ordained as Deacon on June 5, 1943, appointed Curate on September 20, 1943, and ordained as Priest on December 18, 1943. Mr. Davis served until January 15, 1945, when he left to become Rector of a Church at Sea Cliff, Long Island. Dr. Morris, Rector Emeritus, died on December 6, 1942. In December, 1942, Mr. William Bustard retired as Sexton after serving in that capacity for forty years and under six Rectors.

In 1944 greatly needed repairs were made; the upper tier of windows and the memorial windows in the Church were put in order and the floor tiling was repaired. On June 11, 1944, there was a special service observing the twentieth anniversary of Mr. Dietrich's ordination. Bishop Gardner, of the Diocese of New Jersey, was the guest preacher at this service.

The Easter Memorial Offering of 1945 was used for the installation of wrought iron lanterns in the vestibule of the Church. Two trees, with appropriate tablets, were presented by Mrs. Samuel N. Baxter as a memorial to Mr. Baxter and planted on the front lawn of the Church.

THE YEAR 1946 marked the completion of the installation of the new heating plant to care for the heating of the Church and Parish House. To provide for the boilers, etc., an addition was erected at the rear of the Parish House. In order to defray the cost of the new heating plant, monies were used from the principal of the Baxter Fund. This advance was to be amortized over a period of ten years and the Fund reimbursed from the offerings of the members of the congregation. This has been done. Again the Easter Memorial Offering was used to purchase lighting fixtures, exterior lanterns being hung over the entrance to the Church. On September 15, the Right Reverend James DeWolf Perry returned to Calvary Church, participated in the service and preached the sermon.

On December 15, 1945, a service of Memorial and Thanksgiving was held for those who had served in the Armed Forces in World War II, at which the Memorial Chapel, established through gifts from the families of the men who had died in the war; and a bronze tablet, the gift of the Cal-Vets, to the memory of those men, were dedicated.

In 1947, the Vestry decided to renovate the Parish House and a building contractor was consulted. An inspection by the contractor revealed decayed structural timbers, making the building unsafe. In order to correct this condition, new supports for the roof and rafters were built on brick and concrete foundations. In addition, a celotex ceiling was installed in the auditorium; the building was rewired, and the interior was further ren-

ovated and redecorated. The cost of this work was approximately $41,000, and again, the necessary monies to defray the cost were advanced from the Baxter Fund; the advance to be amortized over a period of years and repaid to the Fund from the offerings of the members of the congregation.

On July 2, 1947, Mr. Arthur G. Bryan, who had been organist for eight and one-half years, died. He was succeeded by his brother, Mr. James E. Bryan.

During the year 1948, new wrought iron lanterns, designed and made by Mr. Howard Keyser, were placed in the chancel, transepts and nave of the Church. These lanterns were given as memorials by certain members of the Parish. At the time of the installation of the lanterns, the Church was completely rewired. In May of 1948, a reception was held in the Parish House honoring Miss Isabel R. Krauth upon completion of thirty years of service on the staff of Calvary Church.

After considerable discussion by the Vestry concerning the organ, which had seen its best days, and conferences with several organ builders, it was decided to rebuild the organ, and in October of 1949, a contract for this purpose was let to the Teller Company of Erie, Pa., at a cost of $10,000. The cost was paid from the Baxter Fund as a memorial to Mr. Thomas E. Baxter and his wife. During the rebuilding of the organ, services were held in the Parish House. On Thursday evening, April 13, 1950, the rebuilt organ, and the chimes which had been given as a memorial by Mr. and Mrs. Walter L. Topley, were dedicated.

During the next several years, needed improvements were made in the Parish House through the efforts and interest in the Parish of certain men. A new hardwood floor was laid in the second floor of the Parish House and a new kitchen in the basement was constructed and equipped. Funds for the new kitchen were supplied by members of the Parish through the medium of the Pence Cans.

In 1953 the Young Married Group was organized and one of the projects they assumed was the refinishing of the walls with knotty pine and installing an acoustic tile ceiling in the fellowship room and basement of the Parish House.

On Trinity Sunday of 1955 the Rector dedicated the following memorials:

Bronze tablets in memory of the Rev. Lewis G. Morris, D.D., and Miss Isabel R. Krauth.

A stained glass window in the clerestory in memory of Elinor H. Bowers.

A lectern Bible in memory of Sally J. Jungkurth.

A chancel Hymnal in memory of Katharina S. Leser.

For a number of years the congregation and the Vestry were aware of the need for a general rehabilitation of the Church property. Attempts made to raise the necessary funds met with little success. After much discussion by the Vestry as to the wisdom of employing a professional fund raiser and considering several such organizations, a contract was negotiated with the Wells Organizations to conduct and supervise a Combined Funds Raising Campaign.

The object of the Campaign was to secure pledges from the members of the congregation to cover operating expenses of the Parish and also for capital improvements. The pledges were to be for a period of three years, ending June 30, 1959. Under the leadership of the representative of the Wells Organizations, men and women volunteers were trained in the techniques of solicitation. In May a Loyalty Dinner was given for the members of the Parish at the Germantown Academy. The plans of the campaign and the financial needs of the Parish were explained to those present. A spirit of loyalty and enthusiasm was evident during the dinner and the meeting following.

Although, at the close of the campaign, the original goal was not reached, pledges totaling $154,000, to be paid over a three-year period, were received. As a result of the campaign and payment of the pledges, it was possible to make the following needed repairs and improvements to the Church building: the interior stone walls were cleaned; the tower and front of the Church were repointed and floodlighting installed; the pews were refinished in dark mahogany; new carpet was laid and the floor of the side aisles was covered with cork tile.

Other outstanding events in 1956 were the presentation of five hundred Prayer Books in memory of Lillian Losse Miller and the election of the Rector as Dean of the Convocation of Germantown. The Rector was further honored by being elected by the Diocesan Convention a delegate to the Triennial Convention in Miami, Florida.

Carillon chimes, the gift of Mrs. E. N. Moore, were installed in the tower and were first broadcast in December, 1958.

After having served as organist and choirmaster since 1947, Mr. James E. Bryan resigned. He was succeeded by Mr. J. M. Faulkner.

DURING the twenty years the Rev. Mr. Dietrich has been Rector of Calvary Church, he has been indefatigable in his labors in the Parish, the Diocese and more recently the Germantown Convocation. He received a well deserved recognition when, in June of 1959, at the commencement exercises of the Philadelphia Divinity School, the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him.

The latest project in our capital improvements plan is the rearranging and remodeling of the first floor of the Parish House, which will provide a proper office for the Rector and the Parish Secretary and adequate restroom facilities. This work was started in the summer of 1959.

The members of Calvary Parish have always done their share and more in answering the appeals of the Diocese and the National Church for financial support of various projects. During the twenty years Dr. Dietrich has been Rector, our assigned quota for missions has been progressively increased from $4,000 to $7,800, which was the quota for 1958. We have always met and exceeded our quota.

The various appeals from the Diocese and the National Church included the Reconstruction and Advance Fund to which the members of the Parish contributed approximately $5,000; Builders for Christ, slightly in excess of $6,500; the Presiding Bishop's Fund, slightly in excess of $2,000. The latest appeal was for the Diocesan Capital Funds Campaign, our assigned quota being $18,000. We have paid to the Diocese $8,600, and hope to make a payment of $4,300 before the close of the year.

Calvary Church is proud of its record of supplying candidates for the ministry from among its young men. In addition to the Rev. James DeWolf Perry, Jr., and the Rev. Frederick Morris, both of whom were sons of former Rectors of the Parish, the following young men of the Parish were also ordained in the Priesthood, the Rev. Arthur W. Matthews, the Rev. John F. Leser, the Rev. Kenneth R. Treat and the Rev. Donald B. Baldwin.

ALL OF US know that Calvary Church is an important influence in the community and the Diocese. It is your Church as it was and as it is—at work for the advancement of the Christian Church. The healthy Parish does not rest upon its past history, nor its present accomplishments, but it builds for the generations yet to come.